

Craughwell U19s Round Off Juvenile Athletics Careers in Style

Contributed by Michael Tobin
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The progress that the club is making in bringing athletes through into their late teens and young adulthood was very evident at the two weekends of the National Outdoor Track & Field this year. Up to this year, the distinction of competing for the club at U19 level was held by just 3 athletes – Ann Loughnane (2004) and the Finnegan siblings William (2004) and Sarah (2006). This year, this number doubled with three athletes exiting their juvenile careers at the National Championships last weekend with some fine performances – Cathriona Farrell, Maeve Curley and Rachel Finnegan. Cathriona is not used to being trumped for the highlight performance but on this occasion Maeve stole the limelight with a remarkable record-breaking performance in the U19 girls 3000m race walk where she eclipsed the previous Championship Best Performance by 8 seconds in a time of 14.05.42 – a new personal best for Maeve. This was Maeve’s first National title in the club competition and a great way to conclude her juvenile years. It also brings Maeve’s time to within 4 seconds of World medallist Ann Loughnane’s club record for this distance. Ann’s time was set when she was at the peak of her powers at the time of her silver medal at the World Youth Championships.

With multiple National titles to her credit over the last 7 years, Cathriona is the club’s most consistent performer at National level. In her final year of juvenile athletics, she claimed yet another National title in the U19 girl’s high jump with a leap of 1.68m. This concludes an outstanding series of high jump titles for Cathriona in her juvenile years with a lot more to look forward to in the senior ranks. It was the long jump however that provided an extra special occasion for Cathriona this time around. Cathriona’s first individual medal at National level was in the U12 girl’s long jump in 2003 where she jumped 4.44m to claim the silver medal. She subsequently took gold and silver medals at National level on a number of occasions in AAI Nationals, Irish Schools and Community Games. Last Saturday, she rounded off her juvenile years in the same manner she had announced her arrival at National level – by taking the silver medal in the U19 girls long jump with a super jump of 5.32m. This is a new PB for Cathriona and also a new club record – raising the bar for our younger jumpers who were threatening her old record of 5.25m. This was the first time Cathriona competed at this level in long jump since 2006, having focussed on her specialist high jump event since then. It was an amazing jump achieved with no long jump practise! And in her final year of juvenile athletics, Rachel came very close to the medal podium with a new PB of 9.46m to take 5th place in the U19 girls’ triple jump. Two weeks previously Rachel came even closer to the medals with a 4th place finish in the 100m hurdles in a time of 17.17 and 5th place in the 400m hurdles in a time of 72.13. This completes some outstanding performances from a very young age which saw Rachel win numerous medals at National cross country level, a bronze medal in the National U15 1500m in 2006 and a bronze in this year’s indoor 60m hurdles. In addition, Rachel along with Cathriona combined on club teams that won the National cross country title in their age group in 2001, U11 4x50m outdoor bronze in 2002 and U14 indoor 4x200m bronze in 2005. So well done to the three girls, the club are proud of you! And hopefully your success will continue now as young adults competing at senior level!